

requirement to cut defense spending by an estimated \$465 billion over ten years. Specifically, this authorized funding has been reduced \$19 billion from the Fiscal Year 2011 National Defense Authorization Act, \$21.8 billion from the House-passed version of the Fiscal Year 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, and \$24.1 billion from President Obama's budget. While our nation's economic plight has forced us all to tighten our belts, we cannot put Americans at risk by engaging in irresponsibly deep cuts to our defense spending that would hollow out our nation's military. This conference report strikes the right balance between the important priorities of reducing wasteful government spending and providing for a strong, robust, national defense.

The conference report also sets forth key policies that will help to ensure the safety of our nation and the effectiveness of our military. A few examples are discussed below.

The conference report provides for new sanctions on entities that engage in financial transactions with the Central Bank of Iran, including other state central banks. The provisions apply to the purchase of petroleum, which is of course one of Iran's key natural resources. The threat from Iran has only grown in recent weeks and months. Iran has continued its relentless drive towards developing nuclear weapons; continued its unceasing promotion of terrorism, including a brazen attempt to assassinate the Ambassador from Saudi Arabia to the United States, on American soil; sought to exert its malign influence over key countries in the region, including the nascent democracy of Iraq; and threatened America's strongest ally in the Middle East, the nation of Israel. Cutting off Iran's access to international financial transactions will help stop Iran from making progress towards any of these harmful goals.

Further, the conference report codifies conscience protections for military chaplains. Chaplains are crucial to the well-being of the members of our armed forces, who rely on them for guidance and spiritual nourishment especially when they are serving overseas. Chaplains shall never be forced to act against their consciences. Accordingly this conference report protects chaplains from being forced to perform same-sex marriages in violation of their conscience or their moral principles.

Lastly, the conference report forbids government funding from being used to transfer or release Guantanamo Bay detainees into the United States. To permit known terrorists to enter the U.S. would create an unacceptable threat to the safety of the American people and the conference report rightly prevents such an unthinkable scenario from occurring.

In short, this conference report provides crucial funding and sets forth key policies to ensure our nation's defense.

I unequivocally urge my colleagues to vote for this important legislation.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2055,
CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

SPEECH OF

HON. PEDRO R. PIERLUISI

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 16, 2011

Mr. PIERLUISI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my concern over the changes that

would be made to the Pell Grant program by this spending bill.

In 2009, my colleagues and I on the House Education and Labor Committee made a landmark investment in the Pell Grant program when we passed the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act. Through that legislation, we increased the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,550, up from \$4,050 in 2006. As college tuition rises, the higher maximum award has served as a lifeline to students who want to better their future by attending college or a technical or trade school. I am pleased that the bill we are considering today protects that maximum award level.

However, I am disappointed that this spending bill makes several changes to the Pell Grant program that will close the doors to college to many students in Puerto Rico and across our nation. Specifically, the bill would limit the number of semesters during which a student may receive a Pell Grant, require that a student hold a high school diploma or General Equivalency Degree to obtain a Pell Grant, and reduce the income level below which a student will automatically receive the maximum Pell Grant award from \$30,000 to \$23,000.

These changes appear to be premised on the belief that, for a student to benefit from postsecondary education, he or she must take a traditional path—graduate from high school or obtain a GED, and then complete college within a set amount of time. Most, if not all, of us in this body took that path. But today, an increasing number of students are not taking that path, particularly as our economy continues its slow recovery. If we require students to meet our preconceived notions of the type of student who is worthy of a Pell Grant, we will shortchange many of our nation's young people who seek a better life for themselves. Some students are unable to graduate from high school, to receive a GED, or complete college within 12 semesters because they must work to provide for their family. Other students must care for an ill family member. Whatever the reason, if a student is motivated to attend college or a technical or trade school, we should provide the same financial assistance that we provide to students who take a more traditional path.

In today's economy, graduating from college is more important than ever. Fifty years ago, an individual could obtain a well-paying job without a college degree. Today, college opens so many doors for our nation's youth that would otherwise remain sealed shut. We in Congress should do everything in our power to increase access to college and technical and trade schools. I regret that this spending bill falls short on that measure.

TRIBUTE TO MAYOR OF MITCHELL,
INDIANA MR. DAN TERRELL

HON. TODD ROKITA

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 23, 2011

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege as the representative of Indiana's Fourth District to rise and pay tribute to Mr. Dan Terrell, Mayor of Mitchell, Indiana.

Mayor Terrell is a man of deep civic conviction, a loving father of 6, and a devoted grandfather of 17.

Dan Terrell was born in Mitchell, Indiana, and has remained there his entire life. He has never lost the small town conservative spirit that growing up in the Heartland of America gave him.

Following his retirement from the Canadian Pacific Railroad, Dan Terrell was ready to concentrate fully on helping his hometown overcome challenges that so many small cities and towns have faced: lost businesses, sidewalks that were unsafe or non-existent, infrastructure in total disrepair, drinking water barely able to pass State regulations. During Mayor Terrell's four years in office these, and many other concerns, have not only been addressed but have been corrected. That is leadership.

Besides the tangible accomplishments, his representation of the City as he traveled throughout Indiana offered his constituents a Mayor they could be proud of. A great example of this is the fact that he chaired the Southern Indiana Mayors Roundtable, a convention of all the mayors in Indiana.

His leadership and vision will be truly missed as he leaves the Mayor's office. His love and his devotion for his hometown will continue. Mr. Speaker, it has been a true honor to stand in tribute and offer my thanks to the civic service of Mayor Dan Terrell, one of Indiana's best mayors and my close friend.

MOTION TO GO TO CONFERENCE
ON H.R. 3630, MIDDLE CLASS TAX
RELIEF AND JOB CREATION ACT
OF 2011

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 20, 2011

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of "The Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Extension Act of 2011." This bill is an updated version of H.R. 3630, as amended by the Senate that sends the right message at a critical time for Americans.

At the final hour, with less than three days before millions of Americans decide between whether to buy a toy for their child or turn up their heat, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have finally recognized the importance of working in a bipartisan fashion to provide a tax break to middle class families, to support the unemployed, and to prevent cuts to the payments Medicare provides to doctors.

It appears returning home and facing constituents who would not be able to pay rent or place food on the table for their families, have caused House Republicans to realize that political posturing impacts the lives of those who can least afford it. I stand firm in my support of measures that will help families and those who are trying their best to weather the challenges caused by this economy.

I supported the measure the Senate passed last Saturday. Although not perfect I believed then as I do now that it would grant the American people the certainty they need as we head into a new year.

The Senate Amendment to H.R. 3630 received overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate; passing by a margin of 89 to 10. After a period of negotiation, language has been added to provide simplicity for payroll administrators, and mollify my colleagues on the other side.